

Dear Committee Members,

I am confident that as you come to understand Agenda 21 and its impact on Americans you will support this resolution. Sustainable Development or Smart Growth Plans claim UN Agenda 21 and Brundtland Commission as their creator. Brundtland was the Vice President of the World Socialist. Using phony climate change data to create a save the planet panic, advocates succeeded in getting unsuspecting leaders to sign on. Recently "obesity epidemic scare tactics" have been added to propaganda pushing liveable community agendas.

Groups such as ICLEI and the Local Governing Commission have resented themselves as experts to planning boards and by pushing their agenda through local zoning and regulations have accomplished the following:

- ❖ . infringed private property rights,
- ❖ Infringed on people's right to direct their own lives
- ❖ added to the local, state and federal tax burdens by mandating
- ❖ costly green road construction projects that add to rather than reduce traffic congestion
- ❖ diverted funds from desperately needed repair of existing roads and bridges to lower priority green projects like sidewalks and bike lanes & trails.
- ❖ fostered mass transit and high density housing programs that need to be subsidized to survive
- ❖ Created a combination of false scarcity of what people want (nice sided yards in quiet neighborhoods) and an abundance of "affordable high density housing" that people don't really want and developers only build when subsidized or given tax-brakes--over all result is a rise in housing cost and taxes for all.
- ❖ Increased dependence on federal funds and grants and discourage communities from being self-sustaining and self-governing
- ❖ Driven people away from these heavily regulated areas to areas where people have greater mobility, more housing choices and control over their own property.
- ❖ Been a major causative factor in the urban development profitable agriculture ground surrounding metropolitan areas while property less suitable to farming and more suitable to development remains a less productive burden.

Enclosed is report from the Newgeography (see Newgeography.com) which uses United States Census data to illustrate the failure of livable communities and smart growth policies.

For further research I would also suggest:

Debunking Portland the City That Doesn't Work by Randall O'Toole'
The Cato Institute _THE Citizens Guide to Transportation Reauthorization
The Daily Beast article by George Will Ray Lahood, Transformed Secretary of Behavior Modification.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: [illegible]

DATE: [illegible]

BY: [illegible]

THE LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACT: A REPORT CARD

by [Wendell Cox](#) 09/09/2010



With much fanfare, the Banking Committee of the United States Senate approved the Livable Communities Act (S. 1619, introduced by Democratic Senator Dodd of Connecticut). A purpose of the act is expressed as:

...to make the combined costs of housing and transportation more affordable to families.

The Livable Communities Act would provide financial incentives for metropolitan areas to adopt "livability" policies, which are otherwise known as "smart growth," "growth management" or "compact city" policies.

"Livability" is the latest rallying cry for planners who want to draw lines around urban areas and force people out of their cars and into denser housing. Secretary of Transportation

Ray LaHood has defined livability as "if you don't want an automobile, you don't have to have one." This meaningless slogan presumes that people are forced to have cars. If you are rich enough, you can live without a car on the Upper East Side of Manhattan or Chicago's Gold Coast. If you are poor enough, you cannot afford a car, which means fewer job prospects and higher retail prices from merchants serving a captive market.

Perhaps someday we will be beamed from place to place as in *Star Trek*. However, in the interim, a serious alternative to the car – hopefully a far cleaner, more efficient version – does not loom on the horizon. For all but a privileged few, cars and the quality of life and cars will remain "joined at the hip". This is why research shows a strong correlation between the automobile access in an urban area and economic growth.

The Report Card

It is not premature to issue a report card on the Livable Communities Act, since the effect of its favored policy prescriptions are already well known. Metropolitan areas more inclined toward the act's menu of livability policies (such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Washington and others) are compared to other metropolitan areas (such as Dallas-Fort Worth, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Kansas City and others). Our analysis shows that, for most people, livability policies produce less livability, in terms of higher costs and a lesser quality of life, especially in greater traffic congestion, longer travel times and more exposure to air pollution (Note 1). They will therefore be referred to as "so-called" livability policies.

Housing Affordability: The Livable Communities Act seeks to make housing more affordable. Sadly, the record associated with such policies in terms of affordability is nothing short of dismal.

The Livable Communities Act receives an "F" for home ownership affordability

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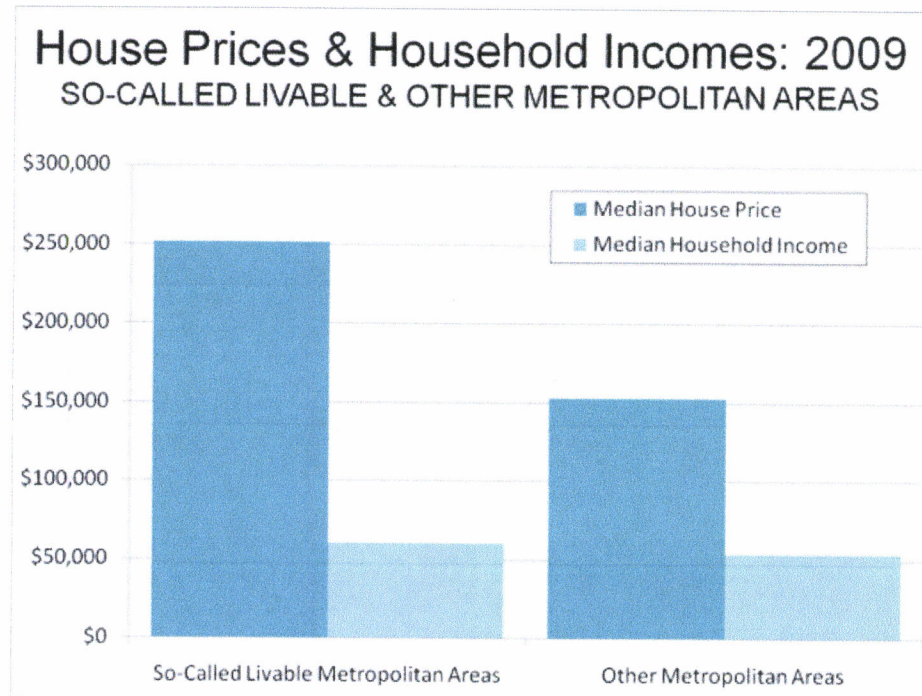
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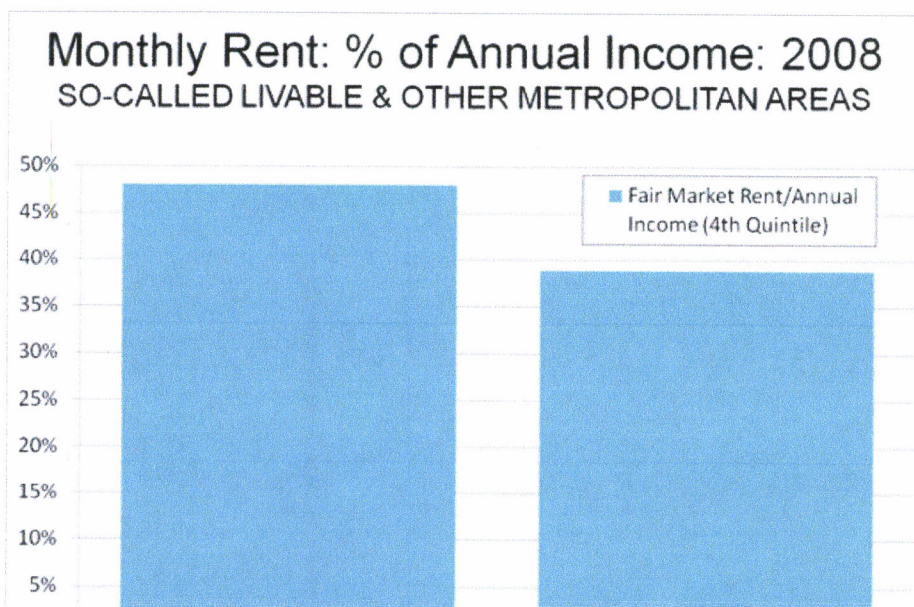
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House prices are considerably higher in the metropolitan areas more inclined toward so-called livability policies. The so-called livable metropolitan areas have nearly 50% higher house prices, *after adjustment for incomes* (Figure 1). If house prices were at the same level relative to incomes as in the other metropolitan areas, the median price would be \$80,000 less. This would mean about \$5,000 less in annual mortgage payments. In the least affordable so-called livable metropolitan areas, fewer than 40% of households can afford the median priced house (Los Angeles, New York and San Jose). In all the other metropolitan areas, more than 70% of households can afford the median priced house (Note 2). It takes a lot of gasoline to equal that difference.



The Livable Communities Act receives an "F" for rental affordability.

Rents are also higher in the so-called livable metropolitan areas (Figure 2). The US Department of Housing and Urban Development "fair market rents," (estimated at the 40th percentile of the rental market, including utilities) for a two bedroom apartment was 25% higher in the so-called livable metropolitan areas in relation to the fourth household income quintile (top of the bottom 25%).



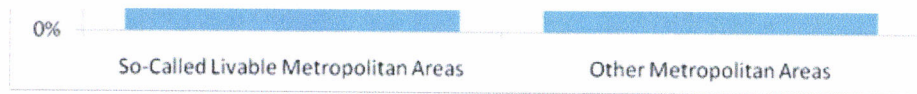
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Why Housing is More Expensive in Livable Metropolitan Areas: The land use regulations typical of the so-called livable metropolitan areas force house prices up by prohibiting development on most available land (urban growth boundaries), imposing building moratoria or, in some cases, by requiring excessively large suburban lot sizes, making it impossible to build housing that is affordable to middle income households. All things being equal, prices increase where supply is restricted, as indicated by a [broad economic literature](#).

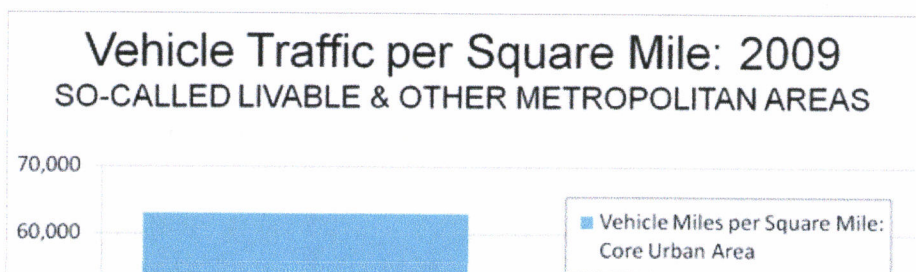
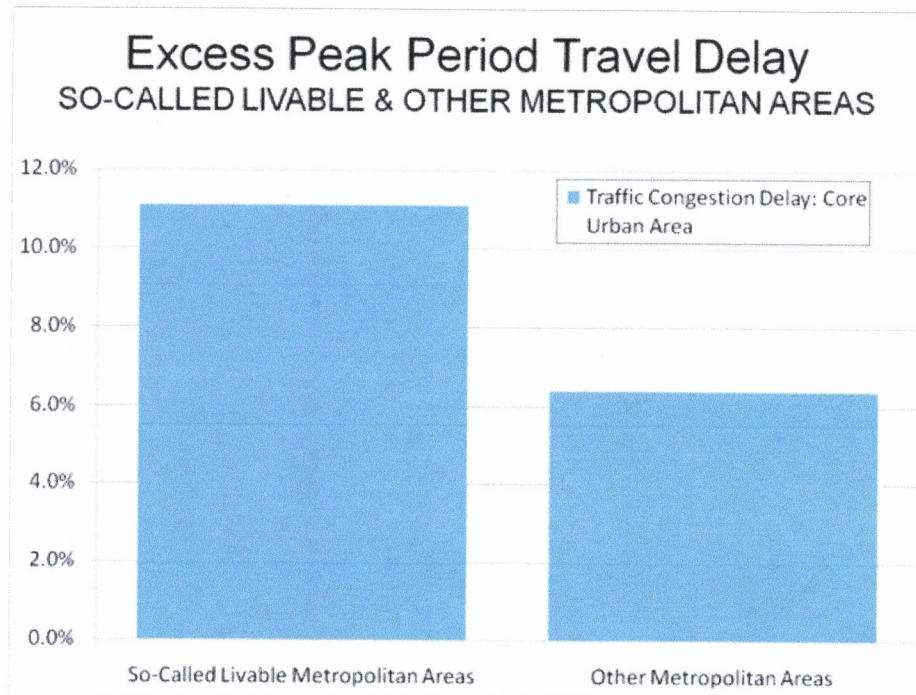
Transportation

According to the findings in the Livable Communities Act the nation wastes 4.2 billion hours in traffic congestion and loses \$87 billion annually from the costs of congestion. The congestion cost is principally the cost of time.

Transportation Costs: Since commuting by transit nearly always takes longer than commuting by car ([twice as long in 2007](#)), any switch to transit is likely to *increase* costs ([lost time is lost time, whether in a train or in a car](#)). The balance of congestion costs are in excess fuel consumption, which would likely also increase under the so-called livability policies, because higher densities [produce greater traffic intensities](#) ([this from Sierra Club based research](#)), which means more congestion and slower travel speeds, which *reduces* fuel economy.

The Livable Communities Act receives an "F" for transportation affordability

Transportation Quality of Life: So-called livability policies worsen traffic congestion and air pollution. This is indicated by the [latest INRIX traffic scorecard](#) showing that average travel delays during peak travel periods are nearly 75% greater in the so-called livable metropolitan areas (Figure 3). Federal Highway Administration data indicates that the intensity of traffic is more than one-third higher in the so-called livable metropolitan areas (Figure 4)



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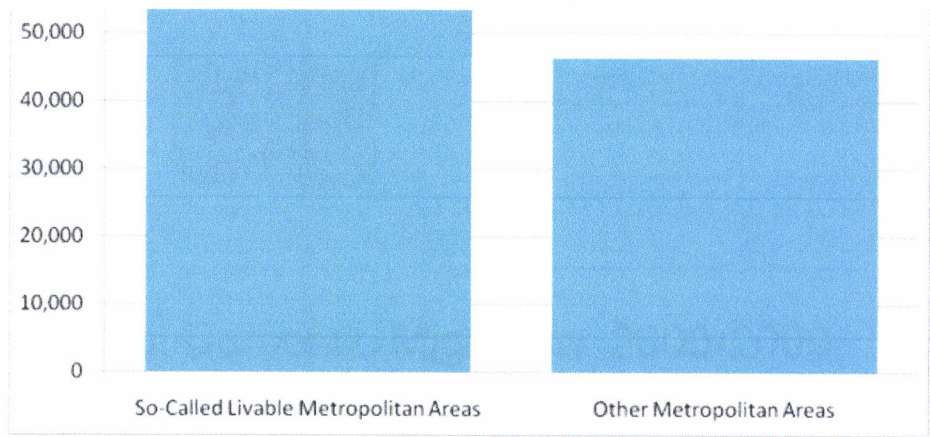
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The greater traffic intensity also has negative health impacts. The [American Heart Association](#) noted that being close to congested roadways increases the likelihood of heart attack and stroke. The American Heart Association cites a study indicating that "a person's exposure to toxic components of air pollution may vary as much within one city as across different cities." Obviously, such exposure will be greater where traffic densities are higher.

The Livable Communities Act receives an "F" on transportation related quality of life issues.

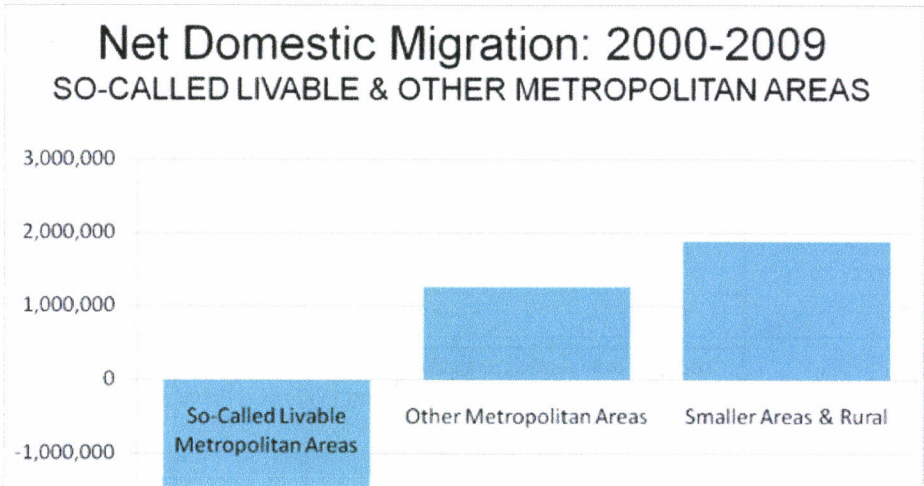
Consumer Preferences

In its findings, the Livable Communities Act says that the demand of new housing in dense, walkable (so-called "livable") areas is 15 times the supply. [This misses the extensive overbuilding of dense, walkable communities that ended in the huge condominium bust in Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, Miami, Atlanta, Chicago and elsewhere.](#) The supply of such housing exceeds the demand, particularly at the current price points.

Consumer preferences are not revealed by planners' delusions from surveys people answer in the abstract. For example, most people want shorter commutes, but they vastly prefer single family houses to apartments. In the real context of issues like costs, living space, or schools, people express their priorities.

The "litmus" test of so-called livability is what people do, not what they say they might do. [Households continue to vote with their cars and are moving away from so-called "livable" areas. According to 2009 domestic migration data compiled by the Bureau of the Census:](#)

- The so-called livable metropolitan areas lost more than a net 3,140,000 residents to other areas of the nation, while other metropolitan areas gained more than 1,000,000 and smaller areas gained nearly 2,000,000 (Figure 5).
- Nearly 3,500,000 residents left the core counties of the so-called livable metropolitan areas for other parts of the nation, while the suburbs gained 340,000 residents.
- In the other metropolitan areas, more than 1,000,000 residents left the denser core counties, while the suburbs gained 2,300,000 (Figure 6).



- [The City: A Global History](#) by Joel Kotkin
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